

TWO FINGERS: MICHAEL'S STRUGGLE

Mi-jung Youm, B.A.

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APPROVED:

Melinda Levin, Major Professor and Program Coordinator
of the Radio/TV/Film Graduate Program

Ben Levin, Committee Member

Jennifer Evans, Committee Member

Alan Albarran, Chair of the Department of Radio/TV/Film

Warren W. Burggren, Dean of the College of Arts and
Sciences

C. Neal Tate, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of
Graduate Studies

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This written thesis gives an account of the creative production of *Two Fingers: Michael's Struggle*, a twenty-nine minute documentary video that explores the life of Michael Alan Rasch who suffers from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. It explains in detail the process of pre-production, production, and post-production of the documentary. It also discusses the integration of theories applied in the documentary. *Two Fingers* shows that although Michael has lived with the disease almost his entire life, his perspective and attitude are more about living and enjoying life. Through it, the filmmaker intends the viewer to gain a tremendously important lesson about the human spirit.

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CHAPTER ONE

PRE-PRODUCTION

Inspiration and Purpose

In 1999, I was looking for a documentary subject for my master's thesis at the University of North Texas. I am always interested in making a documentary about a person who has a unique life. I found several subjects but none of them were intriguing enough. In December of 1999, one of my friends, Anna, introduced me to Michael Rasch's story. Michael was born in Nigeria and is suffering from a debilitating disease that has left him with only the use of two fingers. In spite of this, he has kept his sense of humor and has a positive attitude about life. I was very interested in what she told me about Michael and felt compelled to learn more about him.

I actually met Michael and interviewed him in January of 2000. Through the interview I discovered that he is suffering from a particular variation of Muscular Dystrophy called Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. After meeting him, I was a little disappointed because he had not met the expectation I had about him. I hesitated to make a documentary about him. I felt this subject was not one that interested me because there are not many activities in his daily life, and he was confined to a wheelchair. I thought if I did make a documentary about him, it would not be interesting at all. Also, I did not want to become too involved in his life because I knew he would not live much longer.

When I was 15 years old, my mother passed away after a long struggle with a disease similar to Michael's. It was my first time to see death. Since that event, I have been afraid to meet or have a relationship with people who are suffering from a serious

disease and expecting death. I also worried that he might die while I was making the documentary. These were valid concerns for anyone taking on this sort of subject. I almost decided not to make this film and tried to find another subject.

However, I could not stop thinking of Michael. Whenever I passed his house, I looked at his room and wondered what he was doing. I asked many people about the possibility of making this film, such as friends, teachers, and neighbors, but nobody could give me clear advice. While I was still hesitating to produce the film, I got a phone call from Anna. She told me that Michael was waiting to hear whether I would make the documentary or not. So I decided to meet him one more time to make my final decision.

I met Michael and his mother again on March 17, 2000. When I visited him, he was playing chess with his attendant, Anna. The chessboard had numbers on the vertical side and letters on the horizontal side. When it was his turn, he would say the numbers and the letters in Portuguese, and Anna would move the chess piece where he wanted it. Anna came from Brazil, so he was trying to learn Portuguese. He looked truly peaceful and enjoyed the game. I could not believe that this man was really suffering from a serious disease.

During the chess game, I discovered something that I did not see the first time when I met him. It seemed that he is not dying miserably, but he is living happily. He enjoys his life and gives his life meaning. He focuses more on life than death. Also, I saw his smile during his medical treatments. The treatment is rigorous and consists of an attendant repeatedly pounding his chest to loosen mucous in his lungs. The smile was not full of pain but truly happy.

Michael understands what is happening to his body, and while he fights a daily

battle with the disease, in many ways he wins. His life inspires people who have the same disease, as well as others. First, I did not want to get involved with his life, but I was wrong. I sincerely appreciate knowing him and having a chance to make a film about him. I would like to introduce Michael's life and explore his struggle and his vigor for life through my documentary video *Two Fingers*.

Subject Matter Research

The primary subject in my documentary video *Two Fingers* is a 33-year-old man, Michael Alan Rasch, who is suffering from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), a disease that gradually paralyzes his muscles. DMD is the most common serious muscle disorder in children and occurs in approximately one out of every five thousand infant boys. Although he is an American citizen, he was born in Nigeria in 1967. His father's work as a Christian missionary brought his family to Nigeria. He has one older brother, two younger brothers, and a younger sister. He was home schooled and attended a boarding school in Nigeria until he was 19 years old.

In 1987, Michael came to the United States to attend the University of Missouri. He lived alone in Missouri for one year while he was in college, but that was not easy. One day, his attendant failed to show up for his evening appointment, so Michael had to sleep in his wheelchair. He could not call anyone because he was not able to move his body and was forced to wait until the attendant showed up. This happened twice. Sometimes, his helper did not administer the medical treatments he needed. He could not rely on insincere attendants, and therefore, he gave up living alone.

After these incidents, Michael's young brother, Jeff, came to Missouri from Minnesota in 1989 to help Michael finish his studies. Finally, Michael got a B.A. degree

in Special Education at the University of Missouri in May of 1991. At the time his parents were still living and working as missionaries in Nigeria. However, in 1991, his father was diagnosed with cancer and three months later he died. After his father's death, Michael's mother came to America to stay with him. Michael and his mother moved to Texas to be near his younger sister who was living near Lake Dallas, Texas. After moving to Texas, Michael entered a graduate program and earned a Master of Science degree in Mathematics at Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. He then began his doctoral program in Mathematics at the University of North Texas, but as his condition worsened, he was unable to continue his studies.

Presently, Michael stays at home and tutors math students. Much of his time is spent at his computer creating web sites, sending e-mail, and playing chess games. He has his own web site and created his church's web site two years ago. Since he is unable to flip book pages, he reads four different books at the same time and depends on his mother to turn the pages for him. Also, he is collecting public domain books from the Internet, so he can read these books without his mother's help.

He was given an adjunct professor position in the Mathematics department at the University of North Texas in the Fall of 2000 in which he lectures students majoring in Mathematics. According to his mother, he is keeping busy and never says that he is bored. Even though he is losing his struggle with muscular dystrophy, Michael tries to make his life better everyday.

To understand Michael's disease and pain, I needed information about Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD). I researched books and journals related to DMD at the library in the University of North Texas. I spent two weeks reading several books and

articles. Furthermore, I looked at the Internet to get more resources about DMD. I found web sites about associations, medical centers, and support groups for DMD. Through the research process, I came to know the cause, symptoms, tests, and treatment of DMD.

“Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy is a rapidly progressive form of Muscular Dystrophy that refers to a group of inherited diseases marked by progressive weakness and degeneration of the skeletal or voluntary muscles that control movement” (Charash, 193). Symptoms appear before age six and may appear as early as infancy. There is progressive muscle weakness of the legs and pelvis, which is associated with a loss of muscle mass. “Muscle weakness also occurs in the arms, neck, and other areas, but not as severely as in the lower half of the body.” (Charash, 147) Calf muscles initially enlarge; the enlarged muscle tissue is eventually replaced by fat and connective tissue. “Muscle contractures occur in the leg and heels, causing the inability to use muscles because of shortening of muscle fibers and fibrosis of connective tissue.” (Charash, 149)

By age ten, braces may be required for walking, and by age twelve, most patients are confined to a wheelchair. “Bones developed abnormally, causing skeletal deformities of the chest and other area.” (Emery, 55) Muscular weakness and skeletal deformities contribute to frequent breathing disorders. “Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy occurs in approximately two out of every 10,000 people.” (Emery, 56) Symptoms usually appear in males one to six years old. “Females are carriers of the gene for this disorder but rarely develop symptoms.” (Emery, 56) Because this is an inherited disorder, risks include a family history of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy.

To get more information about Michael’s health condition, I spent many hours talking with his mother, Betty Rasch. She and her husband discovered Michael’s disorder

when he was three year old. Michael could not walk well and fell down often. They took him to see doctors in Nigeria, but none of them could find out what his problem was. Therefore, they decided to come to America to see a specialist. When he was five years old, he was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. He had to wear braces at age six and began using a wheelchair when he was ten years old. There are many young male children suffering from this disease, and most of them die before they are 20 years old. However, Michael's case is unusual. His mother is not the carrier, but his disease is due to a genetic mutation. Indeed, he is now 33 years old. He has been living 14 years longer than any other person who has had the same disease. Nevertheless, his muscles have gradually become paralyzed. Today, he can only move two of his fingers and admits his condition is worsening. He has four daily treatments, which take an hour and a half. These treatments involve a helper striking his chest to release muscle tension. This helps him to breathe more easily.

As a part of the subject matter research, I was interested in the relationship between Michael and his mother. I thought it was important to examine the relationship because Michael spends most of his time at home. Michael's mother has the strongest relationship with Michael among his family members. Also, she has been living with him and taking care of him all of his life except the four years when he attended school in America.

Betty Rasch, Michael's mother, went to Nigeria when she was 25 years old as a Christian missionary. She met Michael's father, Wally Rasch, who also went there as a missionary. They were married in 1961 and had five children. They lived in Nigeria until 1991 and then came back to the United States because Michael's father was diagnosed

with cancer. Three months later, Michael's father died in the United States. It was the most difficult time for Betty because she not only lost her husband but also her biggest supporter. Since then she has had to make all of the important decisions regarding Michael and her family members. She overcame those difficult moments very wisely and bravely. She said that God gave her a strong mind and spirit to overcome any hardship. That is why her face looks older than her age, but her smile and spirit are much younger than her age.

Michael has to ask Betty to move his body every time he needs to move. She prepares five meals a day since he cannot eat a regular amount of food like other normal men at his age. Also, she wakes up at least five times during the night because she has to turn over Michael's body while he is sleeping. He has four medical treatments a day, so she has to prepare for them before and after. Sometimes, if there is no helper to give him a treatment, she has to give him it. These days, they have only two helpers, so she has to give him two treatments a day. She has to pound his chest for one and half hours during each treatment. These activities are never physically easy for an elderly woman like Betty.

After Michael got a teaching job at UNT, she also earned one more job to do for him. She has to take him to school Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Also, when he has office hours, she takes him to his office. Since they live very close to the UNT campus, they use a wheelchair instead of using his van. Going outside is not easy work for Michael and Betty. Since he cannot move his finger to control his wheelchair, Betty has to control it. One day I saw them going back home after class. At that time it was raining outside, so they wore raincoats. He wore a big yellow raincoat to cover himself and his wheelchair. Michael on his wheelchair covered with a yellow raincoat looked like

a big animal or some kind of monster. Their passion impressed me. If I were them, I would have cancelled the class. However, in his first year of teaching, he has never cancelled his class or office hours at all. According to Betty, Michael physically relies on her, and she spiritually relies on him. That is how they survive together through the toughest moments.

Production Research

After I had several interviews with Michael and his family without a camera, I started thinking how I would produce this documentary. The first thing that I considered was that I should never invade Michael and his family's privacy without their informed consent. Specifically, I worried about how to portray his medical condition on camera. Sometimes, he might not want me to shoot him during his treatments or other activities. In addition, his mother or other family members might not want something on camera. Therefore, I had to carefully prepare before beginning to shoot. I visited Michael and his mother several times and spent time together with them before I started production. I also joined their family get together such as an Easter party, and Michael's birthday party. As a result, Michael and I developed a friendship that allowed us to feel comfortable with each other.

In addition, I considered how to approach Michael and his life without any interruption. I would discuss my production schedule with Michael and give him as much information about it as possible. As a result, Michael and his mother would have time to prepare for the shooting and to relax. Also, every time before starting to shoot, I would ask him and his mother to make sure that there were no problems with filming him.

Indeed, I would always try to be in the shooting location early and set up, so they did not need to wait for me.

After careful consideration about Michael's condition, I had to think about what kind of scenes I would include in *Two Fingers*. Showing Michael's medical condition and his treatments would be the most important parts. Interviews with Michael, his mother, sister, and helpers would also be included. To introduce his childhood and family members, I would shoot Michael and his family's old photographs. In addition, I would cover his other daily activities, such as tutoring math to college and high school students at his home, using a computer, and reading books. It was while I was planning the shooting schedule that he got an adjunct professor position in the Mathematics department at the University of North Texas, so I included his class and an interview with the Chair of the Mathematics Department. I also decided to interview Michael's teaching assistant and the student.

Next, I researched the location scouting. Most of the film would be produced in his house, so location scouting was not difficult for me. He is living in a big house near the University of North Texas campus in Denton, Texas, so traveling to his house did not take long. The only problem for location scouting was to find different places for the interviews. In the film, I planned to shoot the interview with Michael, his mother, sister, helpers, and a student in his house. Therefore, I had to find different spots for every interviewee in his house. The other location scouting that I did was the classroom in the University of North Texas. The classroom is surrounded by big windows on two sides, and he uses a projector during class. Therefore, controlled lighting would be difficult. Also, I would have no control over the sound because he uses his own microphone during

the class. In conclusion, I decided to ask him to close the blinds of two windows and turn off the lights in the classroom.

Funding

Since my thesis is a video production, I had to think about what I would produce, and how I would support the expenses for the production. There were three ways to cover the expense of the production. The first one is grants or scholarships for graduate students. The second one is in-kind donations that would provide equipment and facilities free of charge. The last option is self-funding. Even if I had gotten a scholarship, grant, or in-kind donation, I would need some extra funding by myself.

The Mary Pickford Scholarship is one of the scholarships for graduate students. It is funded by the Mary Pickford Foundation and administered by the Association of Moving Image Archivists. It is awarded to a graduate student of merit who intends to pursue a career in moving image archiving. Graduate students accepted to or enrolled in a program in film or television studies or production, library or information studies, archival administration, museum studies or a related discipline may apply.

I found several grants for my production. The National Endowment for the Humanities is one of them. It accepts applications for planning grants to support the design and development of film, television, and interactive media projects that address themes in humanities. The endowment grants are up to \$20,000 for planning. Pollock-Krasner Foundation gives financial assistance to mixed media or installation artists of recognizable merit and financial need. Grants of \$1,000-\$30,000 are awarded.

The Peabody Award focuses on the areas of health and /or medicine. It is considered the broadcast and cable industry's most prestigious prize. It was entered into a

partnership in 1998 with The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation of Princeton. N.J., with the goal of encouraging more and better coverage of health-related issues by electric media. The foundation is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care and has awarded more than \$2 billion in grants since 1972.

One of the biggest in-kind donations available for me is from the Radio, Television, and Film department of the University of North Texas. The department allows students who enroll in the thesis class during a semester to use the department's equipment such as cameras, lights, and editing machines. The students pay fees for use. I found two other in-kind donations; Dallas Community Television Artist-in-Residence and Visual Studies Workshop Media Center. DCTV Artist-in-Residence accepts applications for \$500 worth of equipment access on an ongoing basis within one year. When one funded project is complete, DCTV will review applications on file and select the next project. Visual Studies Workshop Media Center also accepts proposals on an ongoing basis for its media access program. Artists, independent producers, and nonprofits working on noncommercial projects are awarded reduced rates for production and post-production equipment.

I realized that if I had my own digital camera and editing equipment, it would be more convenient to produce my thesis. This would allow me to fund this production personally, and thus eliminate the long and complex grant writing process. Also, I could work on the thesis at home and gain more hands-on experience. For these reasons, I bought a Cannon GL-1™ digital camcorder and Macintosh™ computer for editing. The total cost of this equipment was approximately five thousand dollars. Also, I needed additional crew members to help with the videography and interviews. I found several

fellow graduate students and undergraduate students who were willing to crew for me. I paid their meals and some other expenses. I will include the total budget for *Two Fingers* in Appendix C.

In conclusion, I did not apply for the grants or scholarships that I found because some of the deadlines had already passed for this year, so I was not able to apply for them. Also, some in-kind donations required me to use their equipment at their location. I did not have much time to travel to other states, so I gave up applying for these types of in-kind donation. I planned to buy my own equipment such as a digital camera and a non-linear editing machine, and I knew that as a student, I had access to the equipment of the Radio, Television, and Film department at the University of North Texas. For these reasons, I did not need to apply for any grants, scholarships, or other in-kind donations. However, researching grants, scholarships, and in-kind donations for a documentary production was a worthwhile experience, and I believe that whenever I need them, I can apply for them in the future.

Distribution Possibilities

The fact that *Two Fingers* is a documentary containing medical issues about the description, cause, symptoms and treatments of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy expanded my distribution possibilities. I researched three possible ways to distribute the film. First was finding a distribution company for my film. Submitting the film to a film festival that focuses on a documentary or a student's film was another way to distribute the film. I also planned to distribute *Two Fingers* to medical centers or medical associations; they could use my film as educational material or publicity.

I found two companies that distribute mainly medical programs. Media Projects, Inc. is a Dallas-based distribution company that has made over 30 films. Their work appears internationally in museums, schools, libraries, and TV. They specialize in distributing programs that contain medical issues or information. The WAMHF, World Association of Medical and Health Film, is another company that deals with medical programs. The objectives of WAMHF are to produce medical and health audiovisual media, and to promote the circulation and distribution of other medical and health audiovisual productions throughout the world.

I also researched several distribution companies that deal with documentaries or education programs. Ambrose Video is a leading producer of videotapes and multimedia materials for education and libraries. They have a library of over 1,000 titles that feature award-winning material in social studies, literature and the sciences. The core of their collection is broadcast quality production from the BBC, public broadcasting, HBO and assorted independent producers. Their goal is to provide relevant educational materials for students from middle school to college. Higrade is an independent distribution company specializing in documentaries. All their titles are recent and most were produced for television; they also carry some video and education titles. The Diamondback Corporation is a marketing and distribution company for information and educational video and film projects. These three companies might be approached to distribute *Two Fingers* because the film can be used as educational material.

The second way to gain recognition is to enter *Two Fingers* in film festivals. For filmmakers, a film festival is a place where they can show their work directly, meet audiences, get feedback, and distribute their work. Jan Krawitz, a documentary

filmmaker, says, “a motivation for entering my work in festivals is to create visibility for the piece. For an independent filmmaker, festivals are really a critical first round—they confer credibility on the work.” (Lyons, 24) Moreover, “schools and libraries often buy prints of 16mm shorts and documentaries on the basis of prizes these films have won at various festivals. Many careers of independent filmmakers depend on such recognition.” (Malin, 253) I truly agreed with Krawitz’s opinion, so I researched several festivals that specialize in documentary and student films.

Athens International Film and Video Festival is one of the better college-based festivals. This is a serious and well-organized event that specializes in different themes each year, animation, for instance, or documentary. Its purpose is to establish an annual showcase for independent filmmakers and a meeting ground for persons involved in all areas of film. A substantial amount of prize money is also disbursed. Another film festival for students is NextFrame. This festival was established by the University Film and Video Association (UFVA) Student Film & Video Festival and is the largest student film and video festival in the United States. The competition is open to any student registered in an accredited college or university, regardless of major, anywhere in the world. Entries are accepted in four categories; animation, documentary, experimental, and narrative. The Dallas Video Festival is another festival to which I can submit *Two Fingers*. This festival is one of the largest and most diverse video festivals in the U.S. and provides a showcase for new works by national, international, and regional independent artists. There are no thematic or content restrictions. Entries may be narrative, documentary, animation, experimental and computer graphic.

In addition, I researched medical associations for Muscular Dystrophy or Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy that need programs dealing with the medical issue and health information. The Muscular Dystrophy Association is a voluntary health agency and provides news and information about neuromuscular disease, research and services for adults and children with neuromuscular disease and their families. The Parents Project for Muscular Dystrophy Research, Inc. is another association. This association is committed to expediting a treatment and cure for Duchenne and Becker Muscular Dystrophy by funding research and education. These associations may be interested in using *Two Fingers* as education resources for their members, publicity, or fundraising.

Goals of the Film

I have three main goals in producing *Two Fingers*. First, I would like to share Michael's struggle and vigor for life with people and families suffering from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy or any kind of disease or disability. Through the film, I will address how Michael and his family have accepted his disease and overcome it. The audience will know he is not dying miserably, but he is living happily thanks to his and his family's endless efforts. Therefore, they will realize that this family's care and love for this family member, who is suffering from a painful disease are the most important treatment to coping with the disease. Also, they will understand that care and love are the main elements in keeping their family's happiness.

I especially hope *Two Fingers* can inspire young children who, like Michael, are suffering from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. The film should remind them they are not alone, and that there are people who can truly share their pain. In addition, it will show them how much Michael enjoys his life and seeks out activities that give his life meaning.

They will see that Michael has never given up on life and always has positive ideas about finding meaning in his life. Therefore, the film will encourage them to have hope for their life and to try to make it better as much as Michael does.

Second, *Two Fingers* intends to inspire not only people who have physical diseases or disabilities but also other people who think their life is meaningless. This film will tell them Michael has been suffering from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy since his birth. His disease makes him unable to walk and live like an able-bodied person. He also knows he does not have much time left and will die soon. However, the viewer will see that Michael focuses more on his life than his death through the film. Therefore, if people believe that their life is getting worse or has no meaning due to their current situation, Michael's life in *Two Fingers* will encourage them to see their life in a positive way. Moreover, the film should remind some viewers how lucky they are to have healthy bodies and physical abilities. As a result, they will learn a tremendously important lesson about the human spirit from Michael.

The last goal of the film is that *Two Fingers* is to serve as a useful and educational resource of information about Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. The film will cover the description, cause, and symptoms of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy through Michael's and his mother's interview. Also, it will show his medical treatment in detail. Therefore, the film will be a valuable resource for people or medical associations that need information regarding this disorder.

CHAPTER TWO

PRODUCTION

Overview

The production of *Two Fingers* took approximately ten months. I felt an extended period of time was required since I wanted to observe Michael's life for one year. I also had to take into consideration his medical condition, so I did not hurry the production of this film. I was able to videotape him about once a month. I believe that time gave both of us additional opportunities to think and prepare for the production of this film. Since I planned for a ten-month production period, I was able to spend more time researching the subject matter. I was also able to view my footage multiple times after each shooting and become very familiar with it. This helped immensely when I got to the editing stage.

I carefully prepared each shoot in advance because I wished to provide as little interruption as possible for Michael and his mother. Also, this was the first time for him and his mother on camera, so I felt they might be nervous or frustrated when I brought a camera. For these reasons, I always let them know the shooting schedule in advance before the actual shooting day. In addition, I visited their home and explained to them what I would try to record while videotaping in detail. Sometimes I asked them their opinions about what they wanted to include in the film before shooting. These were beneficial in two ways. First, as contributors, Michael and his mother could feel comfortable and excited about the project. Second, as a director, I could pay more attention to technical aspects during shooting rather than worry about the environment or

the participants' feelings. In these following sections, I will attach the production schedule and discuss the process of each day's shoot in detail.

Production Schedule

Day	Scene	Location
April 4, 2000	Michael's Birthday Party	Michael's Living Room
April 20, 2000	Michael's Treatment with Anna	Michael's Room
May 8, 2000	Family Photo	Michael's Living Room
May 8, 2000	Tutoring a math student	Michael's Room
May 8, 200	Interview with Wade Hamchar	Michael's Living Room
May 8, 200	Outside of House	Outside of Michael's House
August 18, 2000	Michael Preparing for the Lecture	Michael's Room
September 23, 2000	Interview with Koma	Michael's Living Room
September 23, 2000	Interview with Michael	Michael's Living Room
September 24, 2000	Interview with Michael's Mother	Michael's Living Room
September 24, 2000	Interview with Michael's Sister	Michael's Living Room
October 2, 2000	Michael's Class	Class Room in GAB at UNT
October 23, 2000	Interview with Dr. Neal Brand	Dr. Brad's Office at UNT
February 2, 2001	Interview with Michael's Student	Class Room in GAB at UNT
February 2, 2001	Interview with Michael's Teaching Assistant	Class Room in GAB at UNT
February 18, 2001	Recording Narration of Michael's Mother	Michael's Living Room
February 18, 2001	Michael's Treatment with Koma	Michael's Room
February 18, 2001	Shooting Michael's Old Photos	Michael's Living Room
February 20, 2001	Re-Shoot Michael Reading Books	Michael's Room

Process of Each Day's Shoot

Birthday Party

My first visit to videotape Michael was at his 33rd birthday party on May 6, 2000. Because I planned to put this scene at the end of the film, it was important for me to document this once a year event. I was nervous about videotaping his birthday party even though I carefully planned this shooting in advance. There were two reasons for my anxiety. It was my first time using a Sony VX-1000 digital camcorder. I was concerned with how the picture and sound would come out. Also, generally speaking, videotaping a party scene or other similar gatherings is not easy work for a videographer. There are many people at the party, and the videographer cannot predict what will happen. It is often hard to control sound, lighting, and other environmental factors.

As I expected, the footage of the party did not turn out well. I was not satisfied with the sound, the lighting, or the camera movement. Moreover, the voices of Michael and his guests sounded very low, so I was not able to use the audio at all during editing. The reason why the audio was problematic was because I used a wireless microphone to capture Michael's voice and a camera microphone to record his guests' voices. A shotgun microphone would have solved this problem. However, I did not want to interrupt Michael's party and make people feel uncomfortable to see a second person handling the shotgun microphone. Most people did not know I was going to videotape the party, and I wanted to minimize the existence of the camera and myself as much as possible. I wanted people to feel comfortable and enjoy the party, so that I would be able to record a natural party scene. It was a decision I had to make between technical elements of my project versus aesthetic aspects of the film.

The lighting in the scene was poor quality. I did not use any additional lighting equipment because I really wanted to document Michael's birthday party in natural and smooth way. I felt the lighting in the scene was satisfactory because the party occurred at 2:00 p.m. in Michael's living room, and the sunshine through the windows was enough to brighten the living room. However, the color in the scene was a little bit darker and gray. The color was not clear enough. The lighting could have been improved if I had set up the lighting package.

Another technically weak part in the scene was the camera movements. As I mentioned earlier, it was my first time to use the new camera. Not only was I not accustomed to the physical feel of the camera, but also I was not familiar with the functions of the camera. There were several unstable handheld shots in the scene. For example, when Koma, Michael's medical assistant, sang "Happy Birthday," I tried to pan the camera to show people's reaction. As soon as I started to pan, the camera began to shake, and the shot became out of focus. I should not have used auto focus on a handheld camera.

After the first videotaping, I realized that I should have taken the technical aspects of the production into more serious consideration. I also thought I might have to change my plan to use less of the party scene. Moreover, I had to find an effective way to cover the sound. I decided to record a narration of Michael's mother to match the scene. In addition, I chose to insert Koma's song several times under the images.

Medical Treatment

My second shoot covered Michael's medical treatment. I planned to use this sequence at the beginning of the film to introduce Michael and his disease. In addition, I

would use this footage with his mother's narration to explain how his disease progressed, and how Michael was treated.

It would be a very important sequence in *Two Fingers*, so I had to carefully prepare in advance. The day before shooting, I visited his house, watched the whole process of the treatment, and talked with Michael and his mother about what to expect. I asked whether I could shoot the whole process of the treatment, or if there was anything that I should avoid filming. He and his mother were willing to allow me to shoot the whole treatment, but there was one scene that his mother asked me to be careful in videotaping. I had to carefully handle the camera so as not to shoot the lower party of his body when he was moved to the bed from his wheelchair.

Because of the discussion I had with his mother prior to videotaping, I was able to capture plenty of the treatment footage. However, the quality of the footage was not what I expected. While shooting it, I asked Michael and his mother to explain their actions. I thought I could have not only the image but also the sound. However, the ambient sounds of the machines turned out to be too high, and the voice of Michael and his mother were too low. I believed this problem occurred because I used the camera microphone to record audio instead of using the shotgun microphone or the wireless microphone. I did not worry about the sound because I had already planned to put most of the images over the mother's narration. I hoped the editing strategy would solve the problems of the sound.

Family Photos

After videotaping the treatment, I captured Michael's family photos. Photos of family members hung on the walls in his living room. The photos hung in the shape of a

big cross. In the middle of the photos was a framed poem about family love. I tried to take this shot in several ways. I slowly zoomed in and out, tilted up to down, and panned right to left. This helped me to choose the best shot when I edited the film.

I first thought it would be effective to use the photos, the cross, and the poem when Michael's mother introduced Michael's family. However, in the post-production stage, I made the introduction of family short, so I was not able to use them. The film focused more on Michael's current life. If I had made the scene with the family's history, the film's direction would have gone in a different direction than planned, and the length of the film would have been too long. Instead, I inserted the cross and the poem in the scene when Michael's mother talked about God. The images nicely harmonized with her voice-over comments.

Tutoring

The next shoot covered Michael tutoring a college student. Wade Hamchar was a computer science major and had been coming to Michael for tutoring. I visited Michael without the camera to watch him tutor before I shot the scene. I met Wade and told him what I would shoot during the session and asked him for an interview. He was also willing to help me. Michael and Wade met around 2:00 p.m. in Michael's room, so I did not bring any additional lighting. I used the camera microphone because I planned to use Wade's and Michael's interview as a voice over.

In order to introduce this sequence, I asked Wade and Michael to act in some scenes. For example, before Wade came into Michael's room, I asked him to wait outside of the room and to come in when I was ready to shoot. He acted two times for this scene. Another example was that I asked Michael to look outside of the window and say he was

waiting for a student. I knew acting was not normal for a documentary, but I thought a little acting might be acceptable in order to continue a smooth pace for the film.

However, when Michael and Wade were tutoring, I did not ask them to act, and they were not aware of the camera. Therefore, the scenes of tutoring seemed to be natural. I used the camera microphone to catch both voices of Michael and Wade. I did not use any additional light because Michael's room was bright enough for shooting. Videotaping the tutoring scenes was a little bit easier than shooting the birthday party or the interview. There were only two subjects in the scene, and they were studying by sitting on chair, so I could control the environment. Therefore, I shot the entire session of tutoring and took several long shots of the whole scene and some close-ups of Michael's eyes and hands.

While I was videotaping the tutoring, Michael did not plan to apply for a teaching job at the University of North Texas, so I thought this sequence would be the most important part to show his teaching ability in *Two Fingers*. However, Michael got an adjunct professor job at the university in August 2000, so I had to change my plan during the post-production. I arranged his teaching sequence to be the most important part and the longest among other sequences. However, I did not want to delete the tutoring scene because I wanted to show the difference in his teaching ability from tutoring at home to teaching at the university. The other reason why I kept the scene was that Michael had been tutoring for several years, and he spent a lot of time doing it. Tutoring was his usual activity, but teaching was an unpredictable happening, and he would not be able to continue the job for very long. Actually, he was forced to quit the job because his mother was not able to assist him to go to school, and another professor had already occupied the time when he taught.

Interview with Wade Hamchar

After filming the tutoring session, I interviewed Wade. It was my first time to shoot an interview scene for the film. From previous experiences, I learned a lesson about production: I should consider both the image and the sound for the scene. Therefore, I carefully prepared for the interview with the technical aspects in mind. I brought all equipment that I might need like a lighting package, a wireless and shotgun microphone, extension codes, and cables. I chose Michael's living room for the interview because there was a big bookshelf in one sidewall. I thought it would be a good background for the scene. I asked Wade to sit in front of the bookshelf and I placed the camera in front of him. Since I held the interview in the afternoon the living room was well lit. Therefore, I did not need much lighting. I only set a key and fill light. I used a wireless microphone because I wanted to keep the same sound environments for this scene as I did for Michael's birthday party.

As a result, the picture and the sound of the interview were effective, but I was not quite satisfied with the content of the interview itself. Most of Wade's answers to my questions were too short and repetitive. After shooting, I had to decide whether to use that particular interview scene, do it again, or change the subject. Unfortunately, I had to keep it because Wade quit going to tutoring, and Michael tutored a few high school students after he got the job at the University of North Texas. Therefore, I used Wade's interview as little as possible during the post-production.

Strategies of Interviews

After videotaping Michael's birthday party, the tutoring session, and Wade's interview, I felt it was time to begin interviewing Michael and other people. I wanted to

get more information about Michael's life and relationships. Since I was not satisfied with Wade's interview, I was more careful in selecting the interviewees for the film. I chose to interview Michael, his mother, his sister, and his nursing attendant. For these interviewees, my questions focused on Michael's life and his disease. Later, I interviewed the chairman of the Mathematics department at the University of North Texas, Michael's teaching assistant, and a student in his class to get information and their opinions of Michael's teaching.

I prepared the questions and gave them out ahead of time. Before the interview, I instructed each person to begin by rephrasing my question as part of his or her answer. I also asked them to answer with as much detail as possible. In order to better operate the camera, I asked Chris Borges, a graduate student majoring in Radio, Television, and Film at the University of North Texas to conduct the interview. I asked Chris to allow the interviewee to keep talking if they told interesting stories about aspects not included on my question list. As a result, I ended up with several interesting stories that I did not expect. I will include the lists of the question for each interviewee in Appendix B.

Interview with Michael Rash

A week before I first interviewed Michael, I sent him an e-mail to let him review the questions for the interview and asked him to look at them to see if there were any problems or anything that he wanted to include. The questions for Michael covered his childhood, his disease, treatments, his current life and activities, and future plans. Our discussion helped us to process the interview smoothly. However, I asked some questions I did not warn him about such as "Have you ever thought of committing suicide?" and "Are you scared of dying?" I thought if he knew the questions, he might have tried to

hide his real thoughts. I wanted to get honest answers. When I asked him these questions at the end of the interview, he seemed to be a little bit surprised, but he gave me his honest thoughts about suicide and death.

In addition, Michael was very composed and patient during the interview session. I felt the interview was comfortable for both, and I got to know him better through the interview. The content of the interview with Michael was very good, and I was satisfied with it.

However, I had some technical problems with Michael's interview. I chose Michael's living room for the interview because the room has many big windows. I thought I could get light through them and used them as a key light. I also brought a lighting package and reflectors. The interview started at 4:00 pm and ended at 5:30. Since it was mid-September, the sun went down early, I quickly lost light. As a result, the interview scene became slightly darker and darker. It was not that visibly noticeable, but I was concerned while shooting. The other serious technical problem was the sound. I used a wireless microphone for recording his voice. Since he had a respirator machine on his neck, I had to put the microphone on his chest. Because of this, his voice level recorded very low.

One again, I had to decide whether I would keep the interview or re-shoot. I decided to keep it because I thought I might be able to raise his audio level or re-shoot the parts that I really needed in post- production. The other reason why I decided to keep it was that I did not want him to go through the interview process again. During the interview, Michael stopped one time and asked his mother to give him breathing assistance, as he is not able to talk for long periods. Being interviewed for one hour was

not physically easy for Michael. Moreover, I knew from my previous experience of producing other documentaries that whenever I had to re-shoot the interview scene, the interviewees tried to pretend or act, and the contents of the interviews were usually not better than the first one. Therefore, I worried it might happen again at this time.

Interview with Betty Rasch

The interview with Betty Rasch, Michael's mother, was one of the most important elements in *Two Fingers*. As a talking head, she leads the story of the film, and her voice would be used for the narration. Since it was her first time to be interviewed for a film, she seemed to be nervous and was worried about the interview. Therefore I needed to calm her down. I tried to make the environment of the interview as natural and comfortable as possible. Before starting the interview, I told her whenever she wanted me to stop the camera, I would do so. Also, I explained to her how I would use her interview in the film. For example, I told her I would insert some family photos while she introduced herself and her family. This kind of consideration and explanation helped her to be less nervous and more relaxed.

In the terms of the content, the interview was very successful. She understood my questions. Her answers were very organized and prepared. In fact, she wrote down her answers on a note card in advance and sometimes looked at them to remind her during the interview session. The parts when she explained Michael's disease and treatments seemed to be long and to be repeated, but I was able to cut and edit them during post-production.

I believed the interview with Betty Rasch was the best one compared to other interviews in terms of the sound and image. Her voice was very soft and warm. The audio

level was also high enough to use for the narration. I thought her voice would give a comfortable feeling when the audience watched it. The image of her was also natural. The background props such as an old photo of a couple and a ramp also helped to make the scene look comfortable and settled.

Interview with Dr. Neal Brand

As I mentioned earlier, Michael got a job at the University of North Texas and started teaching at the end of August 2000. I was curious how he got the job, and what process he had to go through. To get this information, I interviewed Dr. Neal Brand, the chairman in the Mathematics department at the University of North Texas. Since he prepared the answers ahead of time and had experience as an interviewee, the interview session proceeded very well. Most of his answers were clear, and he made informative comments about Michael's teaching and his characteristics. I was impressed when he compared Michael's disability with students who had difficulty in the Mathematics.

I had a little trouble recording the sound because of the wireless microphone. In most of the interview, I used a wireless microphone with no complications. However, the wireless microphone that I used for this interview was defective. I could not hear any sound from it, so I changed the battery, but it was useless. I used another wireless microphone, but it did not work either. When I tried a third one, I finally was able to pick up sound.

The other trouble was controlling the lighting in the scene. I wanted to interview Dr. Brand in his office. His office was an acceptable place for the interview because there are a big desk, a chair, and many books on the selves. I wanted him to sit on the chair near his desk. However, there was a big window behind of him, and the strong sunshine

came through it. I closed the window blinds. It shut off the light a little bit but still too bright. Therefore, I set two additional lights for a key light and a fill light and use the sunshine from the window as a back light. As a result, the scene was fairly illuminated.

Interview with Michael's Sister, Assistant, Teaching Assistant, and Student

I interviewed several other people, but I decided not to use them during post-production because of the content or because of technical problems. I had an interview with Candra Rasch, Michael's younger sister. I wanted more information about the family and her relationship with her brother. However, most of her interview scenes were slightly out of focus. I wanted to re-shoot it, but she had recently been diagnosed with cancer, so I was not able to do so. The interview with Koma, Michael's medical assistant, was technically fine. However, his English was not fluent enough for viewers to understand. I inserted one scene of his interview in the first cut, but I got feedback that it might be better not to include it in the film, and I deleted it. I was not satisfied with the interviews with Michael's teaching assistant and student in terms of the content. They did not make a clear point, and they repeated themselves. Also, during post-production, I tried to cut the film down to 30 minutes, so it was not necessary to include these interviews.

Teaching

I videotaped most scenes, such as Michael's tutoring and his and his mother's interviews in his house so I needed only two locations shooting to produce *Two Fingers*. They were the scenes of Michael's teaching and Dr. Neal Brand's interview at the University of North Texas. When Michael went to school to teach, I followed him. He did not use any vehicle, but he used his own wheelchair because it took the same amount

of time it would have to use a car. It took only ten minutes for him to get to school, so it was easy to follow him with the camera. I started shooting when Michael's sister packed the backpack attached to his wheelchair. I then followed them as they prepared to leave. Before he left home, Michael looked at the camera directly and explained where he was going. The scene seemed natural; he looked very excited and had a big smile on his face. However, since I used a camera microphone, the background sounds such as passing cars and street noises were too high, and Michael's voice was too low. I should have used the wireless microphone to capture better sound quality. While following them on the street, I had difficulties focusing at times, so some shots were out of focus. Nevertheless, I had enough footage to work with in the post-production stage.

In the classroom, I had various problems with the sound and the lighting. Since Michael used his own microphone for the lecture, I could not ask him to use my wireless microphone. As a result, his voice in this scene was also very low. I used the camera microphones to record student voices and his lecture, but I also got unnecessary room noise. My lighting problems occurred probably because Michael used a projector, so his teaching assistant had to turn off all the lights in the classroom. Because of this, there was not enough light for the scene. I opened the window blinds, but it still was too dark. While editing, I had to choose the shots that had both good sound and lighting.

In conclusion, I was not quite satisfied with the process of the production of the video because of the continuous sound and lighting problems. However, I learned many lessons about producing a documentary through fixing these problems. I had wonderful help from my subjects, Michael, his mother, and other people during filming. As a result, I had effective footage that I could use during editing, and that saved me from re-shooting.

However, I was still concerned that I might have to re-shoot some scenes such as Michael's interview.

Equipment and Crew

I was able to use all digital equipment to produce *Two Fingers*. I was allowed to use both the Sony-VX 2000™ and Sony-VX1000™ digital camcorders, and Final Cut Pro™, a digital non-linear motion picture editing system in the department of Radio, Television, and Film at the University of North Texas. Also, I bought my own digital camcorder, Canon GL-1™, and a non-linear editing system. Using this kind of digital equipment was very useful and provided many control options while making this film.

For Michael's medical condition, I needed to make every attempt not to interrupt his treatments and other daily activities. By using a small digital camera, I was able to videotape him without excessive interruption. In addition, I could adjust camera conditions whenever the scenes required; for example, I was able to control white balance, shutter speed and audio level. When he came out from his room into the living room, I could quickly follow him and make such adjustment as I needed. Even while interviewing Michael, I could increase his voice volume as high as possible because his voice was very low.

I had trouble connecting a microphone to a digital camera because the camera only allowed me to connect a mini plug (1/3") instead of an XLR connector (3 pin professional). Most of the microphones in the Radio, Television, and Film department at the University of North Texas were lavalier microphones and boom microphones that require an RCA jack. The department had few wireless microphones. First, I tried to use an adapter to connect the mini jack to the RCA jack in order to use the lavalier

microphone. However, the adapter resulted in lots of disconnections and low quality sound. So I used a wireless microphone that had a mini jack. As a result, I had a good connection and a good sound. It allowed the subject to move freely.

I had many trustworthy colleagues to help me with the videography and interviews. Pyung Won Lee is an undergraduate student majoring in Radio, Television, and Film at the University of North Texas. As a sound assistant, he helped me interview Michael, and Koma, Michael's medical attendant. Pyung Won was very excited to assist in producing this film because he had little production experience. Jason Shutt and Cris Borges, both graduate students majoring in Radio, Television, and Film at the University of North Texas, were also very supportive. Jason was the videographer who videotaped Michael tutoring sessions, and Cris videotaped some of the lecture scenes. Moreover, Cris was willing to be the interviewer while I was shooting the interviews with Michael and Koma.

CHAPTER THREE

POST-PRODUCTION

Schedule

I spent almost nine months in post-production of *Two Fingers*. The first step for post-production was logging tapes. I had a total of ten tapes and each had almost sixty minutes of footage. It took two weeks for me to log the footage. While logging, I tried to log the footage in as much detail as possible, so I could become more familiar with the content. In addition, the detailed log sheet helped me to recall the footage later.

After finishing this step, I started writing each sequence and editing on paper. The paper edit is a very useful step before editing tape. Paper editing provides a main concept of the film in your head. If you need to change anything in the sequence, you can do it easily and quickly. I was able to finish the paper edit in three days based on the detailed log sheets.

As soon as I finished the paper edit, I started to capture the footage on the computer. I divided *Two Fingers* into eight sequences, and I spent approximately three days to edit each sequence. Once I was satisfied with each sequence, I began to assemble all of the sequences and had the first rough cut completed in one week. The first cut was seventy-two minutes long. The second cut needed to be half that. During the process of the second cut, I re-shot some footage such as Michael's and the student's interview and recorded his mother's narration. I spent two weeks on the second cut. After the second cut, I used my summer vacation to look over the film several times. I restarted editing in the middle of July and shot some footage to include in the third cut. Next, I adjusted the

audio level, put in the transitions, and had the third cut finished at the end of July. The fourth cut did not take long because I just needed to do minor changes and trim some scenes. I finished the fourth cut in early August and had the final edit completed at the end of September of 2001. The completed schedule is as follows:

January 29 - February 4, 2001	Log Footage
February 5 - February 7, 2001	Paper Edit
February 8 - March 4, 2001	Capture Footage
	Edit Each Sequence/Assemble First
	Rough Cut
March 5 - March 25, 2001	Second Cut /Re-shooting
March 25 - July 14, 2001	Third Cut/ Re-shooting/Adjust
	Audio
July 14 - August19, 2001	Fourth Cut
August 20 - September 8, 2001	Final Cut

Overview

I planned to divide *Two Fingers* into eight sequences during the paper edit. For several reasons, I thought it might be easy first to edit each sequence and then assemble them together. First, my film was not a recording of one event chronically showing a person's life. The film contained a huge amount of information from Michael's life and disease from his childhood to the present. I had to compress the information and make a story. The following paragraph is a brief scenario assembled by each sequence that I planned during the process of paper edit.

Though it does not have a title, the first sequence briefly introduces Michael and intends to prompt viewer curiosity. Introducing Michael and his family through his mother's interview is the second sequence. It explains his disease and shows his treatment. The third sequence contains his daily activities such as using a computer and reading books. Also, in this sequence, the relationship between him and his mother is shown. Michael's tutoring session with a math student is the fourth sequence. The fifth sequence includes an emotional moment. It shows his treatment and the interview with Michael, his attendant, and his mother. The sequence tells how he overcomes his disease and explains when he and his mother shared the hardest time and happiest time. The sixth sequence is his lecture at the University of North Texas. It shows how he goes to school and teaches. This sequence includes interviews with his student, his teaching assistant, and the chairman in the Mathematics department at the University of North Texas. The last sequence is his birthday party. It shows how much people love him, and how he enjoys the party.

As I mentioned earlier, I first edited each sequence and then assembled them, so my final cut did not exactly follow the planned scenario. I made many changes in the process of assembling the sequences. I deleted and added some sequences and changed the order of others. I also re-edited scenes in some sequences. In the following section, I will describe the process, the content, and the purpose of each sequence.

Editing Sequences

I already had a firm idea of what I would put in the first sequence according to the paper edit, so I finished the sequence quickly. The first scene of the sequence was outside of Michael's house with ambient sound and the sound of a pounding chest. The camera

moved to his room and showed his wheelchair. Then, a close up scene of Michael's face was shown and the camera moved to a close up of Anna's hand. The next scene was two shots of Michael and Anna during the treatment. The last scene of the sequence was the street shown from the window in his room. I hoped the beginning would cause curiosity in the audience and intrigue about Michael's medical condition and his life.

Editing the second sequence progressed smoothly. Since the intended purpose of this sequence was to introduce Michael, I used his mother's interview as narration. She spoke of Michael's diagnosis of Decennia Muscular Dystrophy, and how it has progressed. I put the scene of Anna giving him the treatment and Michael's old photo over the narration, so the audience could understand his disease and medical condition through the images and the narration.

I decided to show his daily activities in the third sequence. He spent most of his time using a computer to play games on the Internet and to check his e-mail. The sequence showed how he used the computer with only his two fingers and special software. Since he could only move two fingers, he put his index finger on a mouse board to control the mouse, and he settled his last finger on the table to fix his other fingers. He used software so that when he pronounced a word into the microphone attached on the computer, it wrote the words for him on the screen. This scene showed how much time he spent on daily activities, and how difficult it was to write e-mail. This sequence showed how he read four different books at the same time out of consideration for his mother, who would come to turn the pages for him. However, I did not have proper footage, so I re-shot this scene again.

I wanted to emphasize how Michael made his life better despite his disease. The fourth sequence started with him waiting for his tutoring student. This scene showed how excited he was about tutoring this student. While I showed the tutoring session, I included the interview with Michael and his student. Michael explained why he wanted to tutor Math and how much he enjoyed it. The student, Wade, told how Michael teaches Math with his physical disability, and how he was different from other tutors. I also included the interview with Michael's mother because she mentioned that she was proud of his ability to help other people by teaching.

I wanted to focus on his medical treatments in the fifth sequence because he had four treatments a day. Therefore, the treatments were the most important activity in his daily life. However, I had difficulty moving from the fourth to the fifth sequence. I thought showing the treatment again would make a weak transition. Therefore, I asked Michael's mother to explain that he needed another treatment as soon as he finished tutoring. I was able to use this narration as part of a transition by showing his treatment scene once again. In addition, I wanted to make this sequence the most emotional part. While he was having the treatment, I included the interview in which he described his hardest and happiest times. During his mother's interview, she also talked about her hardest times, and why she did not blame God for Michael's disease. In addition, I included Koma's interview in the sequence. He stated that while he could physically help Michael, he gained spiritual advice from him during the treatment. He also discussed Betty Rasch's strength.

The sixth sequence could be considered the climax of *Two Fingers*. It showed how much Michael was able to overcome his disease. It shows that his life has meaning.

The sequence started with him and his sister packing his backpack. Then they left from his room and moved outside of his house. This scene was the first scene in the film that showed him outside. He explained, with a big smile, that he was going to school at the University of North Texas to teach a Math class. The camera followed him and his sister leaving for school. The next scene was in the classroom. There were students, Michael's teaching assistant, and technicians who helped to perform technical equipment in the classroom. Michael used a projector, a microphone, and a notebook computer. I included the interview of the Chair of the Math department at UNT in this sequence. He explained how Michael got the job, and how he performed his duties. I also inserted the interview with Michael's teaching assistant and a student while he was giving a lecture. In the last scene of this sequence, Michael was given a short breathing treatment by his sister on the street on the way back home.

I assembled his preparation for a lecture in the seventh sequence. It was a very short sequence, so it might be included in the previous sequence. However, I wanted to put it separately from other sequences because this scene showed how important his job was for him. In the interview with Daman, his student in class mentioned Michael was perfectly prepared for the class despite his disability. Also, his mother stated that he spent most of his time preparing for his lesson.

The last sequence was his birthday party. I thought it would be appropriate if I put it in the last sequence because it gathered all of the people shown in the previous sequences and how Michael reacted with these people. Many friends and his students came and celebrated his birthday. They gave him gifts and sang "Happy Birthday." Michael enjoyed and appreciated people's coming. However, it showed it was time for

him to go back to his room to have another treatment. Before starting the treatment, he wrote, “Thanks for coming my party”, on the computer. The last scene of the documentary *Two Fingers* ended with a close up of the note and the sound of his treatment starting. The camera moved to the window, and the sound continued until the credits rolled. In the following section, I will discuss the process of assembling the sequences in each cut and mention the strengths and weaknesses of each cut.

First Cut

I simply assembled the sequences edited previously, and I did not adjust either audio or transitions. As a result, the length of the first cut of the film was seventy-two minutes long. My main purpose of the first cut was to visualize the idea that I had in the paper edit and to see the flow of the film. I almost followed the planned scenario except the seventh sequence, which was his preparation for a lecture. When I looked the sequence, I felt it was too short for one sequence and not necessary for the film. Moreover, in the previous sequence Dr. Brand mentioned Michael spent a huge amount of his time for a lecture. Through the first cut, I then could visualize the concept of *Two Fingers*, and I felt a little more confident about the flow of the film.

However, after editing, I noticed that there were several parts that I had to fix, re-shoot, and re-record. Professor, Melinda Levin, my thesis committee chair, also mentioned several problems and gave me many useful suggestions. The biggest problem was the length of the film. I used many redundant scenes and repeated similar content in the film. The audio level of Michael was another problem. In the most of scenes, his voice was very low, so I had to fix this problem. I had to decide whether to re-shoot his interview or to increase the tone of his voice. Another problem was related to the scenes

with Koma. There was one scene where he talked about Michael's mother in the first cut, but it was hard to understand his English. Also, the conversation with Koma, Michael, and his mother was hard to understand because of the bad sound and Koma's inappropriate English. The second cut would shorten the film and solve these problems.

Second Cut

The main goal of the second cut was to shorten the length of the film and trim the sequences. I also want to fix the problems in the first cut. To obtain this goal, I watched each sequence over before editing. I found several redundant parts and deleted them. For example, in the second sequence, when Michael's mother talked about Michael's disease, she repeated similar content, so I deleted these redundant parts. For Michael's lecture sequence I choose a few of the best scenes and deleted the rest of the scenes that involved him in the classroom. It helped me to shorten the film. Due to this, the second cut of the film was forty-eight minutes.

To fix Michael's interview, I eventually had to re-shoot it. In fact, I first tried not to re-shoot and just increase his voice. However, it did not work well because his voice was too low to increase, and the scene also contained very prominent background noise. When I interviewed him the first time during production, it proved to be hard work physically for him and his mother. During the interview, I had to stop shooting him several times because he quickly became tired and had difficulty breathing. His mother helped him to breath with the machine. I felt very sorry for him and his mother. That was why I did not want to re-shoot his interview. However, there was no way I could fix his voice so I asked him to interview once more. To my surprise, he and his mother were willing. This time, we set the interview time early in the morning after he finished his

first treatment. He told me that he had more energy after treatment, and the morning time was better than afternoon. This second interview proceeded quickly and very well. It took just twenty minutes because I only asked him what I needed to put in the film. The sound of the interview turned out much better than the previous one, so I was able to use it.

To solve the problems with Koma's interview, I simply decided not to include it in the film. I felt his character and relationship with Michael was not defined well enough in the film. Instead, I used Michael's comment about his mother's help and her concern for him. Also, I deleted most of the conversation scenes between Koma, Michael, and his mother, during the treatment, so I could make this sequence shorter.

While editing the second cut, I recorded the voice of Michael's mother again for the narration. Since I deleted many scenes in the second cut, I needed a new narration for the remaining scenes. For example, I needed a short explanation about Michael's treatment because I cut out a lot of his treatment's scenes in the second sequence. In addition, she wanted to record the narration again because she felt she did not explain Michael's disease clearly.

The biggest difference between the first cut and the second was the final sequence. I changed the ending scenes in the second cut. In the first cut, his treatment after the birthday scene was the ending scene, but I edited Michael's comment about death in that scene. I believed it looked better because the audience could understand what Michael thought about death, and how he would handle it. Moreover, I felt the ending was not only smoother but also powerful because of the combination of his comment and the sound of pounding on his chest.

I showed the second cut to several people to obtain as much feedback as possible. Ben Levin, a Professor and Jennifer Evans, an Assistant Professor in the Radio, Television, and Film department at the University of North Texas mentioned an important point about the second cut. They felt that the scene of Michael's mother explaining his disease and treatment was too long and unexciting. They said the audience might not be attracted to this film and feel bored. They explained that the film repeatedly showed Michael's mother and the treatment without letting the viewer hear directly from Michael. They suggested me to divide the sequence and insert Michael's talking scene early. Another suggestion from my committee members was to make the film thirty minutes in length. They said if I cut the film to thirty minutes, I would have more chances to submit it at several festivals. I thought this feedback was very good and reasonable. I planned to follow their suggestions in the third cut.

Third Cut

After cutting the second cut, I enjoyed a summer vacation and rested. During this time, I tried to look over the film as the audience not as the filmmaker. Sometimes, when you work on something, it is hard to be objective. In this way I was able to find something that I had not noticed before. In the third cut, my intention was to make the film shorter and fix the sections that had been suggested before. I also inserted the transitions and adjusted the audio level.

First, I trimmed each sequence again. I made the first sequence in one and a half minutes where before it had been almost three minutes. I deleted a picture on the wall in Michael's room because the hand-held shot was very shaky. I also included only one scene of Anna giving Michael the treatment. In previous cuts, there were several shots of

Anna in the first sequence. In later sequences, I showed Anna giving the treatments several different times, so it would be easy to cut them.

I divided the second sequence into two sequences in the third cut. I separated this sequence with focus on his disease and his medical treatment. I kept the content of his disease in the second sequence and moved the treatment to the forth sequence. Because of this change, the second sequence was much shorter than before.

I did not change anything in the third sequence, which recorded Michael in daily activity. However, I thought that I might divide this sequence into two sequences because using a computer and reading books were his daily activities, but they represented two different things. I wanted to show how he overcame his limitations through using a computer with his two fingers. In the reading scene, I wanted to describe his consideration of his mother. But I left it the way it was in the cut. I thought it might be better to change this in the final cut if I needed to because it was a minor change.

I trimmed scenes in the forth and fifth sequence. For example, I put Michael's photos and treatment scenes under his mother narration instead of showing her interview. In addition, I deleted some of Wade's interviews, Michael's tutor student because he repeated himself.

In the sixth sequence, I included the shot of the poem and the cross while Michael's mother was talking about not blaming God. This shot matched the content of what she said. I also inserted the family photos over her narration about the family's relationship. I liked theses two parts because the images and the sound worked nicely with each other.

I cut out some of the teaching scenes in the lecture sequence. I deleted the scene of Michael coming from his room, and some scenes of him and his sister walking on the street. To cover up the background sound, I put a scene of cars in front of the scene of his house. I also included the sign of the University of North Texas. In the film, he and his mother mentioned UNT many times, but they did not say what this acronym stood for. By showing the sign of the University of North Texas, the audience would understand what UNT meant. I trimmed Dr. Brand's interviews as much as possible, and I placed Michael's teaching scenes over Dr. Brand's narration.

I also made the final sequence short. I started this sequence with Michael opening a birthday card, so I deleted all of the previous scenes such as people coming and talking to each other. In addition, I deleted the scene where his friends and family sing "Happy Birthday" because of the copyright issue. Due to this omission, I saved almost two minutes. I inserted Koma's song and the sound of the machine in the end and played it during credits. Finally, the third cut ran thirty-six minutes long.

I showed the third cut to Jennifer, and again she gave me useful advice. One of the suggestions was that it would be better if I inserted a very short fade into black and fade out to black for a transition to separate each sequence. She said each transition would be smooth and create a certain style. I thought it was a good idea because it would create a nice pause. I eventually inserted the transition between each sequence in the fourth cut.

Fourth Cut

I cut the film to thirty-one minutes. I included all the suggestions and feedback that I gained in the third cut. I made several changes here. First I changed the ending

scene again. I moved the scene of Michel's mother speaking about Michael and her children to the end just before the last scene of Michael's interview. I liked the change because it utilized the technique of a "book-end ", which means a film with similar scenes at the beginning and the end. The ending matched the beginning in the film. The film started with his mother's introduction of her family and ended with her comment about it.

The fourth cut contained more sequences than the eight sequences. As I mentioned in the third cut, I separated the second sequence in two sequences. I also divided the fifth sequence into four sequences in the forth cut. I put the four short transitions between Koma's song, Michael's mother's thought about God, Michael's comment of his mother, and his mother's comment about her family. I made the lecture sequence into two parts. One part was Michael going to school, and the other was the teaching scene. As a result, the film had thirteen sequences. I believe this separation gave the film a better flow.

After finishing the forth cut, I was satisfied. I thought the sequences in the film were well organized, and I had included almost everything that I wanted. However, there were still some corrections to be made. For example, in the beginning, there was a scene where Anna was pounding Michael's chest. It seemed to be out-of sync. Also, I had to trim the sound of Michael's mother and Dr. Brand.

Final Cut

I finally produced *Two Fingers* in twenty-nine minutes. In the final cut, I kept the order and the number of the sequence, but I fixed all problems previously mentioned and trimmed clearly scenes and sounds. The biggest change in the final cut was the ending. I

deleted Koma's song from the ending scene and the credit, but kept the machine sound. Ben and Jennifer suggested that if I kept only the machine sound and deleted Koma's song, it would be better. I was not sure about this feedback, so I tried both ways, with Koma's song and without it. Finally, I felt the continuous machine sound without Koma's song seemed to be representative of Michael's endless struggle for life, so it would help the audience have more emotional inspiration.

In the fourth cut I only inserted director, editor, and a thank you note for the credit, but I made the completed credit including all helpers in the final cut. While typing the credit, I remembered and appreciated the many people who helped me to produce *Two Fingers*. Without their help and feedback, I could not have made this film. After printing the final cut on the computer to the tape, I felt I finished a long and hard but a rewarding journey.

Equipment

I used a non-linear editing system called Final Cut Pro™ for *Two Fingers*. I bought my own Macintosh™ computer and Final Cut Pro™ software. Having my own editing system was very convenient for me because I could edit my film at home and did not worry about space for a hard drive. Also, I was already familiar with non-linear systems such as Final Cut Pro™ and Adobe Premiere™. I did not waste time learning these systems.

Non-linear editing provides more choices and altering opportunities than a linear system does. One of the most amazing elements of using the Final Cut Pro™ is the option of batch capture. After logging footage, I could capture the logged footage at one time. Due to this option, I did not need to capture each shot and wait for it to be done. I

could save a huge amount of time in terms of capturing footage. The other useful element of this system was that I could make my film in several different versions. Since my footage was saved in a bin in the system, I did not need to go back to recapture, and I could just access the footage whenever I needed it. When I needed to change some parts of the film, I could bring this footage from the bin, put it in a new sequence, and make a new version of the film. If one must change some parts of the film using linear system, one must start over from beginning to end.

In addition, the system had more than ten audio tracks. I was able to mix all of the sounds that I needed on the several tracks. For example, in the opening scene of *Two Fingers*, I had to mix three sounds together. I put Michael's treatment sounds in track one, ambient sounds in track two, and a special effect sound of a wind-bell on track three. I could separately control the sounds' volume. As a result, I had a wonderful mix of audio for the beginning scene.

During post-production, I ran into serious trouble. I had a 10 GB internal hard drive and a 35 GB external hard drive in my computer, but the space of these hard drives were too small to capture footage of the film. I tried to capture only the footage that I really needed to use in the scene, but the hard drive space was still insufficient. I thought I might initialize the hard drive and be able to divide the hard drives again, but it turned into a terrible mistake. After initializing the hard drive, I could divide it, but I lost all of my saved footage and moved the footage off-line. Off-line means that the same footage is in the bin, but it is not useable and visible. This happened at midnight, so I could not call anyone to help me and I was devastated. Fortunately, the main hard drive remembered the batch capture list, so if I put the same tape that I used for capturing, the computer

could capture the exact footage. Ironically, this accident gave me a lesson how to manage the hard drive space properly for capture and saving the footage.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INTERGRATION OF THEORY AND PRODUCTION

“I’ve been trying to make a series of films on contemporary American institutions, but each time I go out, it’s a kind of voyage of discovery. I think if you knew what the film was going to look like before you started, then you’d simply be imposing a stereotype on a situation, you wouldn’t be learning anything or thinking about what you’d experienced.”

Frederick Wiseman (Sobchack, 349)

Approaches

There are several ways to approach a subject or an event in a documentary and documentary filmmakers attempt to choose the most proper approach for their subject. They may objectively observe their subject or the event, actively participate in the subject’s life or the event, or impose their faith or ideas on the audience about their subject. There are two different dominant styles used in American documentary. If a documentary filmmaker approaches his or her subject with intense observation, it is called direct cinema, but when the audience can see the filmmaker’s active participation in the documentary, it is called cinema verite.

I mixed these two approaches to explore Michael’s life in the documentary video *Two Fingers*. To explain why I chose these approaches, I will first examine the differences and similarities between direct cinema and cinema verite. Second, I will discuss how other documentary filmmakers adopt them in their films. Finally, I will analyze how I integrated them in my documentary, *Two Fingers*.

As I mentioned, direct cinema consists of intensive and objective observation. Therefore, direct cinema filmmakers' "observational approach intruded as little as possible in order to capture the spontaneity and uninhibited flow of live events." (Rabiger, 25) They try not to interfere in the event happening before the camera and do not impose more than a minimal structure in the editing process. Moreover, "they tend to be noninterventionist and self-effacing, at times aspiring to be invisible flies-on-the-wall." (Barbash, 29) They usually wait until they can catch a crisis happening and play the role of uninvolved bystander.

Cinema verite is quite opposite from direct cinema. Verite filmmakers see themselves not as an observer but as catalysts and participants. Recognizing that the act of filming changes the event being filmed, verite filmmakers become an active part of their films. One can hear them asking their subject questions and engaging in dialogue with their subject, and one can occasionally see them and their cameras reflected in mirrors or even in the action itself. Therefore, "Verite is much more interactive than direct cinema." (Babash, 29)

Unfortunately, cinema verite is a form often confused with direct cinema because of many stylistic similarities between the two types of films. Both forms are subjected to technical crudeness; high-grain image produced by fast film which can record under low lighting conditions. Additionally, frequent use of the hand-held camera, haphazard composition, and flawed sound tracks can occur in each style. "Both forms also depend primarily on a cinema of duration, on the long take and on the moving camera that preserve the temporal and spatial continuity of the event being filmed." (Sobchack, 349) They each also include minimal manipulation through editing and a synchronous sound

track. There is very little stylistic difference between direct cinema and cinema verite. The fact that cinema verite makes extensive use of the interview and therefore contains many images in which talking heads address the camera is the only exception.

Frederick Wiseman is one of direct cinema's leading practitioners. In most of his films he chooses to observe and explore well-defined American social institutions supported by public taxes so they are legitimately open to examination. In films like *High School* (1968), *Hospital* (1970), *Juvenile Court* (1973), *Welfare* (1975), *Model* (1980), and *The Store* (1984), Wiseman's aim is to present the everyday life of institutions. Wiseman is interested in the ordinary process of the institution he records. His films take their shape from the recurrent and cyclical functions of institutional life.

"Wiseman talks about his work as a subjective exploration of institutions; he still sees his function as recording with as little rhetoric and self-presence as possible from the events themselves." (Sobchack, 352) Wiseman makes viewers responsible for how they interpret what they see on the screen. His success is evident, as many of his films have excited controversy and have produced opposing interpretations. *Law and Order* (1983) has been viewed as presenting a very fair portrait of the Kansas City police department. *Law and Order*, however, has also been praised by groups unsympathetic to increasing police power as an anti-police documentary emphasizing police ineffectiveness and brutality.

Albert and David Maysles are other notable filmmakers in direct cinema. The Maysles brothers in their landmark film *Salesman* (1969) and in *Grey Gardens* (1976) initially avoided such issues by focusing their cameras on people who were already public figures. "The Maysles brothers look for the extraordinary and exceptional

moments in ordinary life and for subjects that offer a built-in dramatic structure.” (Sobchack, 356) Their films avoid cyclic editing and tend to be shaped dramatically, emphasizing through camera movement and editing what has been called the "privileged moment" in which another human being does something special and personal or revealing before the camera. In *Grey Gardens*, the Maysles brothers inserted the scene of the elder daughter who danced singing a song alone before the camera. She was immersed by her dancing, and it seemed to remind her of a past life. It was very private moment. The camera naturally followed her movements. The Maysles brothers did not edit this scene at all and showed the whole dance scene in the film where the camera operator was asked to dance with her.

The Drew Associates, including filmmakers Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, and D.A. Pennebaker are the founders of American cinema verite. “Drew and his associates had progressed from barely acceptable to nearly fully developed in terms of cinema verite filmmaking.” (O’Connell, 75) *On the Pole*, only the second of the Drew documentaries to be made, with the marginally adequate equipment still being developed, is an almost completely modern cinema verite film. Films by the Drew Associates in particular typically build toward a crisis, not only because such a structure is inherently dramatic, but also because in critical moments people reveal aspects of their character that are normally hidden in day-to-day life.

“The Scottish documentary filmmaker John Grierson defined documentary as the ‘creative treatment of actuality.’”(Bruzzi, 68) This quote challenges the definition of ‘actuality.’ When a documentary filmmaker brings in a camera to catch an event or a subject’s life, how much can the filmmaker actually catch in its purest form without his

or her own perspective? Can the event or the subject be still actual in front of the camera and the filmmaker? I believe it is impossible not to include the filmmaker's influence even if he or she tries to objectively observe the event or the subject. They will affect the film by their existence with a camera and their decision-making in selecting of shots during shooting or editing. Therefore, I decided that I would not only objectively observe Michael's life, but also I would participate in the film if my participation could make the film more natural. As a result, *Two Fingers* followed the approaches used in direct cinema and cinema verite. In the following section, I will discuss how to apply them in the film with several examples.

Nick Broomfield, a documentary director, often uses the two mixed approaches; both objective observation and intensive participation in his films. For instance, *Soldier Girls* directed by Broomfield in 1981 shows how the director and his crew participate in the film. It follows women soldiers doing basic training. The film does not pretend to be natural or unaffected by what it finds. The viewers see a discharged women soldier embrace the camera operator in the film. "The films let us see where the filmmaker's sympathies lie and let us guess at the arrangement, liaisons, and even manipulation that made each phase of shooting possible." (Rabiger, 340)

Another good example is the film, *Best Boy* directed by Ira Wohl in 1980. This film is about Ira's cousin, Philly Wohl, a fifty-two years old man, who has been mentally retarded since birth. Ira also used the mixed styles of direct cinema and cinema verite. His film included objectively observed images, interviews, narration, and voice-overs. In the introduction of the film, Ira stated why he made the film and what it was about. The director became a part of the documentary in a variety of ways, including his suggestion

to the family that Philly needed an education in order to be independent. This film was a record of what they did and how it changed Philly's life. In the film, we often see Ira and his crew filming the documentary. The camera was not only a tool to observe the subject, but also a participant in the film. In one scene, Philly looks at the camera and seems to really like it. The director lets him touch the camera.

I integrated the theories of direct cinema and cinema verite in *Two Fingers*. The first example is the sequence of Michael's medical treatment. I approached Michael with objective observation. I included the whole process of his treatment from the beginning to the end. The scenes consisted of several long shots of Michael and his medical assistant, Anna, giving him the treatment. The scenes also included synchronous sounds such as the sound of pounding on his chest and the operating machine. These objectively observed images and sounds are examples of methods used in direct cinema. Between the scenes, I inserted Michael's mother's narration to explain his disease. Also, in some parts, I included close-up scenes of his hands, face and eyes in order to portray his feelings and emotions. Through this sequence composed of the mixed methods, I intended for the audience not only to observe the treatment but also to provide a better understanding of his disease and his suffering. Moreover, I wanted to produce a sympathetic feeling in hearts of the viewers.

There are similar scenes in *Best Boy*. When Philly goes to school to study with mentally retarded children, the camera shows how he attends class and how he reacts to the classmates and the teacher. In this sequence, most shots are long shots, so the audience can objectively observe Philly's actions and response. However, there are some

close-up shots that help express his emotion. Through these scenes, the viewer understands Philly's emotional feelings, and how he sincerely enjoys the school.

The medical treatment sequence in *Two Fingers* is also an example of how I participated in the film. In order to convey the process of his medical treatment, I asked Michael and his mother to explain their actions to me while shooting the scenes. The camera captured the images of Michael and his mother and also recorded my voice asking questions to them. I inserted my voice with the images in the rough cut, but I deleted them in the final cut of the film because I changed the scene and finally inserted his mother's narration. However, I believed my participation in the scene helped Michael and his mother feel more comfortable and act naturally. Initially they seemed to be uncomfortable and unnatural because of the existence of the camera. So I asked them to ignore the camera and lead me through what they were doing.

Interviewing the documentary subject is one of the methods used in cinema verite. There are two styles of interview; formal and informal. I interviewed my subjects in the formal style. Through post-production editing, these interviews were combined with objectively observed images. For example, I inserted the sound of the interviews with Michael's mother and department chair with Michael's teaching scenes. In *Best Boy*, director Ira Wohl included several informal interviews with Philly and his mother. The audience can hear Mr. Wohl's voice asking questions, and it looks very natural. There is one scene where I conducted an informal interview with Michael. Before he goes to school, he speaks to the camera to explain where he is going. This scene looks very natural and helps the audience to understand his action.

Direct cinema filmmakers generally avoid using narration, but some cinema verite filmmakers use narration in their films. The narrator can be a third person, one of the participants in the film, or the director of the film. In *Best Boy*, the director is the narrator and the participant. In the beginning, Ira Wohl explains why he makes this film. I think this is a very appropriate approach for the film. In this case, the filmmaker becomes the narrator and tells the story about his family members in order to help the audience better understand Philly's situation. I used a similar method in *Two Fingers*. I used Michael's mother as the narrator and used her comments for voice-overs. She introduced Michael to the audience and told her son's story in *Two Fingers*. I thought using his mother's voice was a good choice for the film because it provided a more intimate effect as well as provided a great deal of information about Michael, his disease, and his relationships.

Structure

Two Fingers is not an event-centered film or a historical documentary film, but it is a film observing a person's life from the past to the present. However, it is not a biographical film that has a chronological structure either. It may be categorized as some kind of progressive film. The film's goals are to explore how Michael is able to accept his disease, overcome the disability, and finally give meaning to his life. Therefore, the film has a structure of introduction, development, discovery, and conclusion.

There is another documentary that is similar in structure to *Two Fingers*, in terms of a progressive film. *Educating Peter* was originally directed by Thomas C. Goodwin and Gerardine Wurzburg and shown in 1992 on Home Box Office cable channel. It is about Peter, a Down's Syndrome child who has always attended special schools but then enrolls in a public school. The film has also a structure of introduction, development,

discovery, and conclusion. The film follows Peter's first year in a regular classroom. It starts with his first day of the school and ends the last day of the school year. Through this film, the audience observes how he becomes educated and adjusted to a normal school system. The first day is terrible, and he and other students have bad experiences. However, as the film progress, Peter's attitude improves, and his classmates learn to accept him.

In the beginning of *Two Fingers*, Michael's mother introduces her family members and Michael. She explains what his disease is, and how it has progressed over shots of his treatments and old photos. The audience notices he has lived with this serious disease almost his entire life. During the development of the story, the film shows his medical treatment while his mother's narration explains it. The viewers understand his physical disability. They gradually see how he overcomes his disability and makes his life meaningful. The film explores what he does during his daily routine. The audience discovers that he does not lie on the bed all day long, rather he works on a computer, reads books, and tutors students. Moreover, they notice how he reacts to other people. Finally, the film shows Michael teaching mathematics at the University of North Texas. The viewers see how he gradually overcomes his disability and contributes his teaching ability to society.

Two Fingers features another unique structure, called a "book-end." The film has similar scenes at the beginning and the end. In the beginning, the film starts with a scene that zooms in from outside Michael's house to the window of his room with the sound of pounding on his chest. Then, the viewer hears his mother's narration introducing her family and Michael. At the end of the film, his mother gives a comment about them. Next,

Michael's comment about death is followed, and the camera slowly zooms out the window. The pounding sound continues to the credits. By using these two structures, I was able to gradually develop the story of the film and make the viewers more informed and sympathetic to Michael's life.

Ethics

Two Fingers includes a huge amount of information about Michael's disease and contains some private moments between him and his family. Therefore, the film may raise some ethical issues because of the content. First, I worried about invading his and his family's privacy. "Persons may have agreed to serve as subjects for the films, but a waiver of privacy is not absolute." (Gross, 124) I also considered how much Michael and his mother would open their life to me even if they were willing to agree to be subjects of my film. For instance, I wanted to videotape the whole session of Michael's medical treatment, which is very private moment for him and his mother. I asked them whether I could shoot the treatment and if it was a problem. He and his mother did not mind me documenting the treatment, but his mother asked me to make tasteful shots when recording his body.

This treatment sequence may raise an ethical issue about humanity. The film shows how Michael is moved from his wheelchair and how the medical attendant treats him. The viewer may be shocked at the way the attendant strongly pounds on his chest. Also she uses a blanket to roll him over. It seems the attendant treats him like an object. Therefore, not to mislead the viewers, I inserted Michael's mother explaining the process of the treatments in detail among the scenes.

Another ethical issue I worried about is exposing Michael to the public. His life has never been exposed by media. He has a small social life because of his physical disability. Therefore, being a subject for a documentary is a big venture for him. During production of the film, Michael seemed to be very excited and seemed to enjoy the process. I believed making the documentary gave vigor to his routine life. However, I am not sure how this documentary will affect his life, as well as affect how people think of the disease. People may want to know more about him or of his disability; therefore, he may be able to expand his social life and have more chances to meet people. However, they may also invade his privacy. Therefore, I hope *Two Fingers* does not give any negative influences on his life.

I gave much thought to the ethics of mother and son relationships and the possibilities of objectifying the dying while producing the film. I knew that Michael was more focused on living rather than dying. Also, even though he was afraid his death, he believed his death would be the same as other people's death. However, his mother, Betty Rasch realized his son's death would come soon. She did not want to mention the dying in front of him.

Before I started shooting the film, I was worried about his health. I asked myself whether he could live until I finished the film-otherwise what I should do? Therefore, I asked his mother whether I could follow him with a camera to hospital if he was sick, or I could film his funeral if he was dead. I knew this question might hurt his mother, but I had to make sure for producing the film. First she did not give me a clear answer and seemed to hesitate in making a decision. Later she told me that she talked to her family members and they agreed to let me to produce the film in both cases.

I also wanted to have permission from Michael. So I first asked his mother whether I might ask him for the permission. She said it might be better to ask him about only following him to hospital when he was sick without mentioning the funeral. She seemed to be afraid that I might hurt his feeling by asking to film his funeral. However, when I asked him to videotape him going to hospital, he made a joke. He said that I was not able to shoot the scene because he had not been ill for the last two years. I was very impressed with what he was saying. He was very confident of his life and not worried about his death, unlike his mother.

I was concerned about some religious issues in *Two Fingers*. Michael and his mother often mentioned Christian belief in the film. At the end of the film, Michael said that he knew that after dying he would be with God in heaven. During her interview, his mother said she believed the illness came from sin. I thought her speech could be a controversial issue for some people who had a different religious opinion. Therefore, I was concerned about deleting this scene. I finally decided to keep it. The reason was that Michael's family had a strong background in Christian belief, so I thought it might be natural that they emphasized their belief in the film. However, I was very careful not to excessively portray their belief because this was not a religious film.

In conclusion, *Two Fingers* was well integrated by the two different styles of direct cinema and cinema verite. I was able to objectively observe Michael's life using the approaches and the methods of direct cinema. In addition, using the style of cinema verite, such as interviews and a narration, helped the audience understand his disease and relationships with other people. However, as I mentioned earlier, *Two Fingers* may raise some ethical issues of privacy, humanity, objectifying the dying, and religion. The film

was not intended to introduce any of these issues. The film's goal is to introduce Michael's unique life and share in his suffering and struggle. Therefore, I hope the film does not mislead any audience.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATION OF THE COMPLETED WORK

Pre-Production

Producing a documentary can be compared to constructing a house. Before building a house, an architect first draws a blue print, buys materials, and finally builds a house. Therefore, the stage of pre-production for producing a documentary would be compared to the blue print for the house. To make the blue print, the architect will research materials and consider the main frame of the house. Like the architect, the filmmaker has first to research a subject, funding, and distribution possibilities for his or her film during the stage of pre-production. Also, the filmmaker has to think of the film's goal and purpose.

The process of researching the subject is the most essential phase of all when producing a documentary. Therefore, during the pre-production stage, I mostly focused on researching the subject matter. The most interesting aspect of Michael was that he could only use his two fingers. Despite this disability, he was able to get his Master's degree in math. I considered titling the film *Two Fingers*, and after meeting him, I was able to confirm this because I believed his two fingers would symbolize his life and his ability.

Through research, I was able to find out why he could only use two fingers. Before researching my subject, I had never heard about Dechenne Muscular Dystrophy. I researched Dechenne Muscular Dystrophy in books, journals, and web sites as previously noted in chapter one. I spent many hours talking about the disease with Michael's mother.

Through my research, I found much of information about the disease and learned definitions, symptoms, and treatments for it.

From learning about Michael's disease, I was able to understand him better. In addition, being familiar with his disease helped me speed up the process of pre-production and production. After completing the research, I had a better idea how I would focus on his disease in this film.

During pre-production, not only had I researched the disease at the library, but I also had several pre-interviews with Michael and his mother at his house. Through the pre-interviews, I learned about his background and his current life as well as his disease in detail. From this information, the main concept of *Two Fingers* was born, and I was easily able to develop the storyline of the film.

Michael and his mother invited my family to many of their gatherings. I learned how Michael's family has overcome difficult times and how important they are to each other. Through these meetings, Michael's family and my own built strong friendship and trust. Because of the trust and the friendship, I was able to bring my camera anytime and to videotape some intimate moments of Michael's daily life.

Production

The production stage progressed smoothly based on the well-organized pre-production and the ten-month shooting schedule. Before shooting, I scouted out each location. I also talked to people in the scenes and made sure they understood the process and the content of videotaping. When I held interviews, I carefully prepared the questions and gave them to the interviewees in advance. As a result, I did not have any unexpected obstacles during the shooting process of production.

However, I had some problems operating the equipment. As I mentioned in chapter two, I was not familiar with the new camera, so I made many mistakes during the first shoot. I set Sony VX 2000 on auto focus instead of setting the manual focus. It produced several out of focus shots when I moved the camera. The camera did not know which subject to focus on. After shooting, I tried to set the camera on the manual focus, so I could have less out-of-focus scenes.

Another problem when handling the equipment was using a wireless microphone. After I found out the connection problem as I mentioned in chapter two, I always used the wireless microphone. However, some of the wireless microphones did not work properly. When I interviewed Dr. Neal Brand, I had a serious problem with the wireless microphone. I was not recording a signal through the microphone, so I changed to other microphones, but they did not work either. I tried four different wireless microphones and finally found one that worked properly. At this moment, I was very embarrassed and felt sorry for him because he had to wait for me for fifteen minutes. After this incident, I always tested the microphones to see whether they worked properly before I checked them out of the equipment room at the Radio, Television, and Film department in the University of North Texas.

Making an appointment with interviewees was another difficult task during production. I wanted to interview Michael's teaching assistant, Randall Reams and Michael's student, Damon Gochneaur, before starting winter vacation. However, they were very busy studying for their final examinations, so I had to postpone the interviews until the spring semester. When I contacted them again, they were willing to interview. I tried to interview both at the same time, but it was really difficult. When I made an

appointment with them the first time, Damon did not show up because he totally forgot about the appointment. The second time, Randall did not appear. It happened two times when one guy showed up and the other one did not and vice-versa. Finally, I interviewed them separately, but it took me one month to set up the interviews. From this experience, I realized how difficult it was to manage people and time together as an independent documentary director.

Post-Production

Since I watched the footage each day after shooting, logging the footage was a fairly easy process. In addition, I was able to finish the paper-edit in a short time because I already had the main concept about the story of the film during pre-production. Therefore, I thought I could finish editing *Two Fingers* in three months.

However, the most difficult moment was actually cutting on the computer. Even though I had a well-prepared paper edit, I had to make some serious decisions about which scenes I would include or delete in the film during editing. It was really hard for me because I wanted to include everything about Michael's life and his activities. As a result, the first cut of *Two Fingers* was seventy-eight minutes long. I knew it was too long, but still I could not decide which scenes or which sequences I should delete. I showed the rough cut to several professors and friends and asked for feedback and suggestions. Thanks to their advice I finally was able to cut the film down to twenty-nine minutes.

While editing the film, I learned that when making the decision of which scene to delete or change, I must be very critical and deliberated. Otherwise the film could have gone in a direction that I did not intend. For example, one of my main purposes in producing the film was to show Michael's struggle and determination, so I knew to

include the scenes on how he tried to overcome his disease. If I had included many interview scenes where other people talked about his family or friends, it would not make sense.

The other lesson that I learned was how important feedback and constructive criticism are during the editing process. For the case of *Two Fingers*, I made five different versions of the film. Each time, I received useful and effective suggestions and advice from other people. They discovered elements in the film that I had not seen before. Sometimes they suggested I change something in a different way that could turn out better. In conclusion, as the director and producer of the film, I realized how important my choices are and how much feedback and criticism affect the decision-making process of this film.

During the entire process of making *Two Fingers*, I sincerely enjoyed every moment. I appreciated the fact I had a chance to observe Michael's life and share special moments with him. Producing *Two Fingers* gave me a tremendously important experience in learning about the human spirit not only as a filmmaker but also as a person. I hope through *Two Fingers* the audience will share the same feeling I had and understand that Michael's life is as valuable as any other person's life.

APPENDIX A

APPROVED PROPOSAL

Title, Medium, and Length

This title of the proposed film is *Two Fingers*, the medium for the film is Digital Video, and its length is thirty minutes.

Intended Audience

This film is aimed primarily at people who suffer from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and their family and friends. They will be inspired by Michael Rasch's fight with the disease and his struggle for life. They will learn from him how to make their life better. The viewer will gain a tremendously important lesson about the human spirit from Michael.

Short Description

Two Fingers explores the life of Michael Alan Rasch. Although Michael has lived with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy almost his entire life, his perspective and attitude are more about living and enjoying life. The film explains how his disease progressed and how he treated it. This documentary focuses on his day- to-day challenges, academic efforts, and family relationships. They show that Michael enjoys his life and seeks out activities that give it meaning. In addition, the film shows Michael contributing to society through teaching math and tutoring students at the University of North Texas. Finally, the viewer understands Michael fights a daily battle with the disease, but in many ways he wins.

APPENDIX B

QUESTION LIST FOR INTERVIEW

Michael's tutor student

1. How did you meet Michael?
2. How long have you known him?
3. What was your first thought when you talked to him on the phone?
4. What were your feelings when you actually met him?
5. How do you two work together?
6. During tutoring, are you scared when he has a breathing problem?
7. What are the differences between him and other teachers?
8. How do you think of him as a teacher and as a person?
9. Is there anything more about Michael that you want to discuss?

Michael

1. How would you explain your disease?
2. When did you realize that you were going to die?
3. Have you ever wanted to commit suicide?
4. What was the hardest time in your life?
5. When did it happen?
6. What was the happiest time in your life?
7. How do you treat your disease?
8. What do you do when you do not have a treatment?
9. Why do you want to tutor in math?
10. I heard you have a job. How did you get the job at the University of North Texas?
11. What do you do?
12. Is the job is difficult for you?
13. Are there any problems so far?
14. What were the students' responses to your disability?
15. What is your teaching style?
16. What kind of equipment do you use to teach?
17. How was Africa?
18. Do you really miss being there?
19. If you were not sick, where would you want to go
20. What would you want to do?

Michael's Mother

1. What is Michael's disease?
2. Would you explain this in detail?
3. When did you discover it?
4. How did it progress?
5. What kind of treatments does Michael have?
6. When was the hardest time to take care of Michael?
7. When was the happiest time in your life?
8. Have you ever blamed God for Michael's disease?
9. As a mother, how is he different from other children?
10. When he got the job, what was your response?

Chairman in Math Department

1. How do you know Michael?
2. How was his condition at that time and how is it now?
3. How did Michael get the job?
4. Why did you decide to give him the job?
5. Were there any objections to offering him the job due to his disability?
6. What kind of special equipment does he need to teach the class?
7. Have you ever heard any complaints about Michael and his teaching?
8. How do you think of Michael as a former student, a teacher, and a person?
9. Is there anything more about Michael that you want to discuss?

Michael's Sister

1. When did you realize Michael was different from your other brothers?
2. How did your mother talk to you about him?
3. Would you tell me about his and your childhood?
4. What were the happiest and saddest moments with him?
5. Do you feel responsible because you are his closet sibling?
6. Is it inconvenient to live close to him?
7. When you met your husband, how did you tell him about Michael?
8. What was your husband response?
9. Have you ever blamed God for Michael's disease?
10. What do your brothers think of him?
11. What is the relationship between Michael and your son?

Michael's Assistant

1. How do you know Michael?
2. How long have you helped him?
3. What was your first thought when you meet him?
4. What do you do during the treatment? Explain the process of the treatment.
5. Is it difficult to give him the treatment?
6. What kind of conversation do you have during the treatment?
7. What do you think of his personality?
8. Is there anything more about Michael that you want to discuss?

Michael's Teaching Assistant

1. What was your feeling when you first meet Michael?
2. How does he teach Math in class?
3. How do you and Michael work together?
4. What were the students' responses the first class day?
5. How about now?
6. Have you and Michael had any problems so far?
7. How do you think of him as a teacher and as a person?

Michael's student in class

1. What were your first thoughts when you saw Michael the first class day?
2. How about the other students?
3. How do Michael and his teaching assistant teach?
4. Are you comfortable with them teaching?
5. Were there any problems?
6. What are the differences between him and other teachers?
7. What do you think of him as a teacher and as a person?

APPENDIX C

PRODUCTION BUDGET

ITEM	RATE	UNITS	COST	ACTUAL COST
Production Personal				
Writer/Producer/Director	\$300.00	20 days	\$6,000.00	in-kind donation
Researcher	\$50.00	20 days	\$1,000.00	in-kind donation
Sound Assistant	\$100.00	10 days	\$1,000.00	in-kind donation
Videographer	\$150.00	10 days	\$1,500.00	in-kind donation
Editor	\$200.00	30 days	\$6,000.00	in-kind donation
Extra Crew	\$50.00	10 days	\$500.00	in-kind donation
Subtotal				\$0.00
Production Supplies/ Purchase				
60 Minute Mini Digital Video Tapes	\$10.00	10	\$100.00	
Master/Edit tapes (S-VHS)	\$10.00	1	\$10.00	
Canon GL1 Digital Video Camera	\$2,500.00	1	\$2,500.00	
Subtotal				\$2,610.00
Equipment Rental				
Sony VX-2000	\$1,500.00	10 days	\$15,000.00	in-kind donation
Tripod	\$25.00	10 days	\$250.00	in-kind donation
Extra Camera Batteries	\$25.00	10 days	\$250.00	in-kind donation
Lighting Kit	\$400.00	10 days	\$4,000.00	in-kind donation
Wireless Microphones	\$70.00	10 days	\$700.00	in-kind donation
Expendables (Adapters, Cables)	\$50.00	10 days	\$500.00	in-kind donation
Subtotal				\$0.00
Post Production				
Digital On-Line System	\$400.00	20 hours	\$8,000.00	in-kind donation
Mac G4 Computer	\$1,300.00	1	\$1,300.00	\$1,300.00
Extra Hard Drive	\$200.00	1	\$200.00	\$200.00
Final Cut1.2 Software	\$50.00	1	\$50.00	\$50.00
Subtotal			\$1,550.00	\$1,550.00
Publicity				
Preview Kits	\$25.00	5	\$100.00	\$100.00
Posters/Flyers/Brochures			\$500.00	\$500.00
Festival Entry	\$50.00	5 festivals	\$250.00	\$250.00
Subtotal				\$750.00
Total Budget				\$5,060.00

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